

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An instrument for distracting an intervertebral space, the instrument comprising:
a first elongated section having a proximal end and a distal end, the distal end having at least two prongs extending therefrom for contacting a surface in an intervertebral space, and further having a proximal end and an interior side having at least two laterally-spaced grooves disposed thereon;
a second elongated section having a proximal end and a distal end, the distal end having at least two prongs extending therefrom for contacting a surface in the intervertebral space, and further having a proximal end and an interior side having at least two laterally-spaced grooves disposed thereon;
said first and second elongated sections connected at their proximal ends such that said interior sides face each other, the interior sides forming a passage dimensioned to accommodate the passage of an artificial intervertebral disc and a device for manipulating said disc, said passage effecting distraction of the intervertebral space.
2. The instrument according to claim 1, each of said first and second elongated sections comprising a curved cross section.
3. The instrument according to claim 1 further comprising a device for releasably attaching said elongated sections to each other at their respective proximal ends.
4. The instrument according to claim 1 further comprising a c-clip adapted to releasably connect said elongated sections to each other at their respective proximal ends, each of said elongated sections further comprising a channel for receiving a leg of said c-clip.
5. The instrument according to claim 1 at least one of said elongated sections further comprising an exterior side having at least one transversely disposed ridge formed adjacent to the distal end of said elongated section.

6. The instrument according to claim 1 at least one of said elongated sections further comprising at least one longitudinal aperture formed medially thereon extending from the distal end of said elongated section.

7. A method of distracting an intervertebral space comprising the steps of:
providing an instrument comprising opposing ramped surfaces having proximal and distal ends, said distal ends each having at least one prong extending therefrom for contacting a surface in the intervertebral space, said first and second elongated sections connected at their proximal ends such that interior sides of the elongated sections face each other, the interior sides forming a passage dimensioned to accommodate the passage of an artificial intervertebral disc and a manipulation device for manipulating said disc;
inserting said prongs between the vertebral endplates defining the intervertebral space;
securing said disc to said manipulation device;
inserting said manipulation device in said passage;
advancing said manipulation device through said passage such that the advancing manipulation device causes the opposing ramps to spread thereby distracting said intervertebral space.

8. The method according to claim 7 comprising the further step of inserting said disc into the intervertebral space.

9. An instrument for distracting an intervertebral space comprising:
a pair of identical ramps facing one another and converging toward one another and a connecting member operably connecting said ramps to each other, each of said ramps further comprising at least two intervertebral space engagement members extending from a distal end of said ramp and an interior side, said interior side comprising at least one longitudinally disposed guide that extends along said intervertebral space engagement members.

10. The instrument according to claim 9, said distractor sized to correspond to a baseplate footprint of an artificial intervertebral disc to be implanted.

11. The instrument according to claim 9, said at least one guides comprising at least two laterally-spaced grooves.

12. The instrument according to claim 9 said intervertebral space engagement members comprising laterally spaced prongs.

13. The instrument according to claim 9 at least one of said ramps further comprising at least one vertebral body stop.

14. The instrument according to claim 13 said at least one vertebral body stop comprising a transversely disposed ridge.

15. The instrument according to claim 9 further comprising an instrument accommodation feature formed medially in said ramp extending partially along the length of said ramp.

16. The instrument according to claim 9 said instrument accommodation feature comprising a longitudinal aperture.

17. A system for distracting an intervertebral space comprising:
an instrument according to claim 9;
an artificial intervertebral disc; and
a manipulation device for manipulating said disc; wherein
said artificial intervertebral disc comprising an upper baseplate and a lower baseplate, each of said baseplates having outer, opposite facing surfaces, said outer surfaces having disposed thereon a centrally disposed convex dome and a plurality of teeth disposed along at least a portion of a periphery of said baseplates,
said vertebral space engagement members dimensioned in width to slidably fit between the convex dome and the teeth on the baseplates, and dimensioned in length to reach far enough into the intervetebral space to provide leverage support for a wedging action.

18. The system according to claim 17 wherein the teeth of the disc are disposed such that they slidably engage said longitudinally disposed guides.

19. The system according to claim 17 wherein the manipulation device is insertable between the opposing ramps.